

Each of the ten Sikh Gurus or "the dispeller of darkness", as the term Guru connotes, who appeared in the land of five rivers, the Punjab, during the span of 239 years (1469 to 1708 A.D., Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh), had a very distinct and distinguished role to play, in their short sojourn on this planet, to alleviate the sufferings of mankind, spiritual, as well as, temporal. This culminated in spiritual and political emancipation of Bharatmata from the fetters of the alien thralldom which began with the raid of Muslim general, Mohammad bin Qasim on June 21, 712 A.D.

The end of such a brutal era came only when after over a millenium the Khalsa power, raised by Guru Gobind Singh on the day of Baisakhi, 1699 A.D., came of age and took possession of the Punjab, their homeland. The Khalsa flags fluttered nonchalantly on the buildings and streets of Kabul with unforgettable memory.

The Sikh Gurus attained successfully their sacred deal with indefatigable zeal, unmindful even of suffering supreme sacrifice at the hands of bigot and fanatic Sultans by the end of Guru Arjan's pontificate in building inescapables of an independent religious-way of life—Path—Panth or Church i.e., a central place of worship—Darbar Sahib; a book of religion—Guru Granth Sahib; a complete congregational Sikh Sangat with full spiritual and moral cohesion with unity to stand as one man in the event of an unholy challenge to the faith and their existence. In addition, on the organisational level, an institution of Masands or Masnad holders was established which functioned as an instrument and vehicle to collect the *Deswandh*—tithe, in cash and kind, to channelise the same to the central organisation for day-to-day maintenance and working plus the needs to their own parish.

The Gurus also developed the institution of Langar—Free Kitchen—not much popular in India hitherto, which proved very conducive to banish caste discrimination and to foster a high sense of fraternity among the masses.

In the eyes of the keen assayers of the pace of the events, "Sikhism began to assume more definite proportions actually as a new community. It was tending to become a Church, a movement within non-ecclesiastical Hinduism, an order by the side of ecclesiastical Islam and a State within the Empire of Hinduism".

Guru Arjan was born in Goindwal, district Amritsar, on April 15, 1563 A.D. to Mata Bhaniji, the holy consort of Guru Ramdas, the daughter of Guru Amardas, the third Sikh Guru. He was the youngest of the three

Guru Arjan Dev

brothers namely, Pirthia, Mahadeo and Arjan.

He was married first during the life time of Guru Ramdas to Mata Ramkaur but this noble lady did not live long and passed away in the year 1589 A.D. leaving no issue. He was remarried in 1590 A.D. to Mata Ganga, daughter of Bhai Sangat Ram or Kishan Chand of village Lau near Phillaur. Mata Ganga was a lady of deep faith and intelligence. One son was born

ded in making alliance with the highups in the government circles to intervene for the restoration of his due. He prevailed upon Sulhi Khan, a senior and influential government official, who came from Delhi to assist him to village Kptha, in Malwa tract, where Pirthia was staying with his family engaged in his private business ventures.

One day as he was demonstrating Sulhi than his successful venture of brick-kiln, it so hap-

*Sulhi ke heath kahi na
pahauchaye
Sulhi kooye muae napaak.
Narayan shielded me from
Sulhies design
Sulhi's hand failed to reach
me
Sulhi met an unholy death.*

The Great Builder

As a great organiser of the faith, the Guru built important centres for peaceful propagation of Guru Nanak's mission. He, thus, raised Hari Mandir, Amritsar, Hari Mandir Tarn Taran, township of Kartarpur near Jullundur and a Baoli in Dabbi Bazar, Lahore, to name the few

The Poet, Builder And Organiser

By : Giani Brahma Singh, Ajmer

to her in 1595 A.D. at village Vadali, near Amritsar when Guru Arjan was in transitory habitation there for the unfortunate reasons of undue hostility and harassment by Pirthia and his ilk malevolently assisted by state officials. He claimed that the seat of Guruship was his right by birth as the eldest son totally oblivious of his unsuitability to be a leader of an immature spiritual institution. Pirthi complained and success-

ned that the restive horse on which he was perching, tripped over into the burning oven of the kiln and singed with his rider on the spot. It was, in fact, an unholy and un-Islamic quit-tance of a faithful Muslim by burning alive. The event has been described by Guru Arjan in the Adi-Granth, in the thanksgiving hymn for the Divine protection :—

Sulhi tay Narayan raakh

important ones.

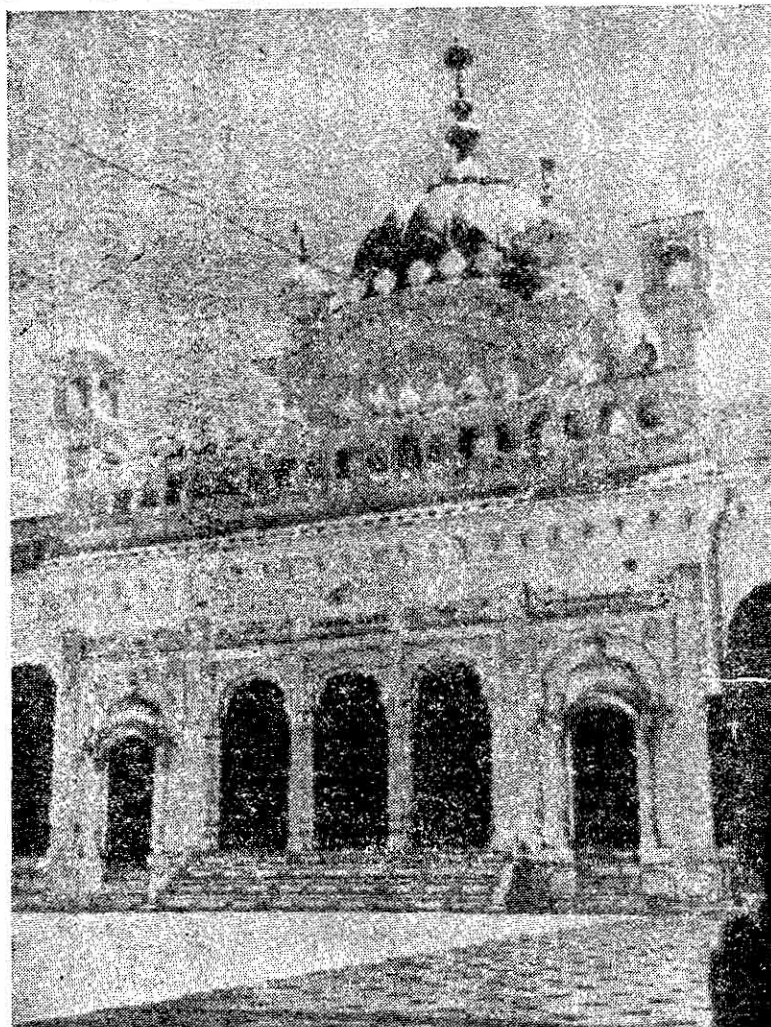
The work of excavation of two tanks—Santokh Sar (Pool of Contentment) and Amritsar (Pool of Nectar) was begun by Guru Ramdas before his demise under the instruction of Guru Amardas, the third Sikh Guru, in 1581 A.D. The work was resumed by Guru Arjandev. After the construction of the tanks Guru Arjan planned to build a Hari Mandir, Abode of God, in the centre of the Amritsar pool, where every individual without discrimination of caste, creed, colour, sex and status, might sit in peace and pray his Maker in the midst of blessed and transporting unending chant of Hari Kirtan or Sam'a.

Accordingly an edifice with four doors on each direction, with "Hall above Hall"—two storeys—was raised in the centre of the pool, connecting it on the Western side with a pathway—symbolising *Puf Sarab*—the cross-over bridge—which links the *Bahisht* with the nether world—with the outer preambulatory of the pool. The water had been allowed free flow, symbolising rivulets under the bridge through the narrow window-type small passages known as *Swarag Dwarees*—(Doorways to Bahisht)—purposely made for giving a vision of the sacred habitation.

Woe to we, the ungrateful ones, who do not realise the blessings of Guru Arjan who brought down on the earth for living people the enliven abode promised by Allah only to those who pass the Grand Judgment on the day of Quiyaamat.

Compilation of Adi-Granth

A parallele most significant achievement to the building of Hari-Mandir was the collection of sacred hymns or Bani of the earlier four Gurus and editing them into a single volume of religious book i.e., the Adi-Granth. Sardar Khushwant Singh writes : "The Granth is a unique historical document. It is perhaps the holy kind of



Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore built in memory of Guru Arjan Dev. This sacred shrine is situated opposite the Lahore Fort, north-east of Samadh of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The entrance to this Gurdwara is through a door set in marble in the east. An ornamental flying marble arch in front of door marks the beginning of a court paved with white and black marble tiles.

"O blissful night long be thy hours,
O wretched sleep, be brief,
I have a tyrst with the Lord I love,
I long to touch the Lotus Feet of the Lord."

—Guru Arjan Dev

writing of scriptural nature which has preserved without embellishment or misconstruction the original writings of the religious leaders". It has engendered amongst the Sikhs a positive feeling of communal consciousness and a common source to seek spiritual inspiration and guidance.

Before setting to work for compilation Guru Arjan planned to collect the writings of the previous three Gurus. Guru Amardas has earlier collected the hymns of Guru Nanak and Guru Angad and adding his own he had them rewritten by Sansram, his grandson, son of his elder son Baba Mohan. Guru Arjan deputed Baba Budha and Bhai Gurdas to secure the manuscripts from Baba Mohan but the efforts proved abortive. Guru Arjan thereafter personally went to Goindwal and with due cajole and panegyric he succeeded to obtain the Bani-Pothis from Baba Mohan and brought them to Amritsar.

He set to rewriting them, adding his father Guru Ramdas's and his own composition, in a separate and peaceful camp near the place now known as Ramsar. Unknown to the history of earlier hagiological writings, Guru Arjan, in proof of his being a leader of Mankind, invited the preceptors of the then important religious sects to proffer their Bani for incorporation in the Sikh Scripture to make it a Book of Universal significance and acceptance. The writing was done by Bhai Gurdas Bhalla and the completion took over two year. The sacred volume was on completion was placed most reverentially in the Hari Mandir on a *manji*—small cot—under a canopy properly draped in costly wraps. Bhai Budha was appointed as the first Granthi.

And thus the final volume respectfully called as Guru Granth has the authorship (from 1708 onwards) of 7 Guru Sahiban, 15 saints or bhagats—Hindus, Muslims and Sudras, all denominations, from all parts of the Indian sub-continent, together with 21 Bhats or Bards including Bhai Mardana the life long Minstrel of Guru Nanak. It has 1430 pages, fulscape, with 5,894 hymns rendered in chaste, 31 Ragas or musical measures, coming in nearly 15 Indian dialects covering Arabic Persian, Sanskrit and Pali. It is simply mystical to observe that the

writing which starts with numeral 1-Onkar ends in the same digit 1 covering all the big volume which signifies that the entire Bani has praises of the ONE and the ONE only and that is perfectly true as the Scripture of the Sikhs carries no tales and no stories but only the *Gunga* of the Supreme Para-Brahma-Waheguru.

Guru Arjan — His Martyrdom

Emperor Akbar's eschewal of extremism in intolerance of

non-Islamic faiths; his wedding alliances with unproselytised Rajput princess; his applying *Tilak* on his forehead and sun-worship in the Hindu way and wearing a rosary; his non-killing of cow; his non-observance of fasting—*Sau'am*—in the month of Ramazan, a *Rukan* or pillar of Islamic *Shariat*; his very tenuous faith in circumcision when boys up to the age of 12 could go without it; his drinking *Gangajal* to satiate his thirst; his faithful listening to the teachings of Join sadhus and Jesuit fathers and to crown all his refusal to abstract (non-existent) un-Islamic hymns in the Holy Adi-Granth but to be impressed with the catholicity of the teachings contained in it and remark that "it was a volume of reverence", were some of the

cankorous irritants with the fanatic countries. They poisoned Salim's (Jehangir) ears with promise to fix him up on the throne sooner it was vacated. This tempted him to make short shrift of the Monarch by drugging him. Akbar says in his own words, "Baba Sheikhji, since all the Sultanate devolves on thee, why hast thou made this attack was on me". Salim was addressed as Baba Sheikhji by his parents as he was born with the blessings of Sheikh Salim, a Sufi dervish who lived in the *khanqah* of Hazrat Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer.

The vicious vicissitudes in which Jehangir was brought up against the wishes of his royal parent, had turned him into a hard hearted person who to please his crafty courtiers would go out to any length to harm his non-Muslim subjects, not sparing his trusted Hindu generals. His torture and murder of Guru Arjan was an innate sequence of his inbuilt hatred for the Hindu and Sikh kafars.

Jehangir, in his autobiography-Tauzeq-e-Jehangiri, writes:—"That in Goindwal, one Hindu named Arjan in the garb of sainthood has been beguiling many gullible Hindus and even many a foolish follower of Islam has faith in his spiritual greatness. He is keeping his

shop of falsehood (*Dukaan-e-Betal*) warm for over three to four generation. I had a mind either to stop it or bring Arjan to Prophet's faith. He also helped rebel Khusrav and when this fact came to my notice, I ordered he should be brought to my presence and having handed over his houses, dwelling places and children to Murtza Khan (Sheikh Fard Bhkhari) and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death by political torture."

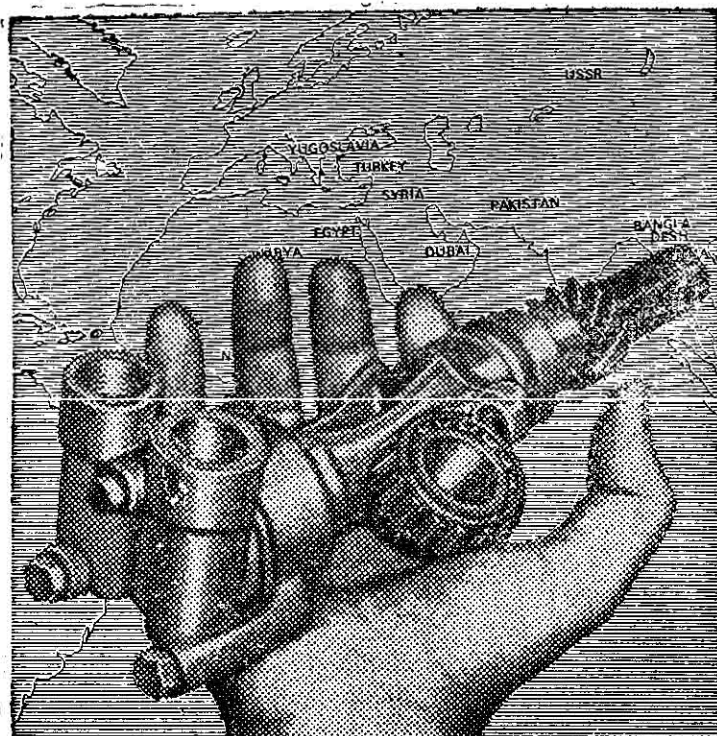
And this political penal code was known to be "YASA", i.e., to kill politically involved holy men by torture without spilling their blood on the breast of Mother Earth. And Guru Arjan suffered torture as disbeliever for five days.

He suffered much more and on 30th May, 1606 A.D. the Guru's soul through the agency of flowing waters of Ravi mingled into the limitless blue waters of the Ocean still echoing through the void—

"Tera bhaana meetha lagaye
Har naam padarath Nanank
mangaye."

Thy will is sweet, O Lord!
Nanak yearns for the wealth
of Thy Name.

And my head is lowered on the feet of the Guru like whom hardly any one in blood and flesh walked on the face of this earth.



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